

15 steps to balance the budget, cut spending and secure America's future

The Blue Dog Blueprint for Fiscal Reform is designed to be an incremental and systematic approach to restoring the fiscal integrity of the country in the immediate term, and securing our economy for future generations of Americans. Budget experts from across the political spectrum agree that Washington must put a plan in place now in order to balance the budget within 10 years, and lay the groundwork for sound fiscal policies over the long term. The Blue Dog 15 step plan is aimed at achieving these two important goals.

1. Restore Pay-As-You-Go budget rules. Members of Congress have an obligation to be responsible stewards of the taxpayers' money, and that means paying the bills and not adding to the deficit. The first step we can take to ensure that government does not spend beyond its means is to restore the proven, bipartisan pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) rules that effectively brought about budget surpluses in the 1990's.

2. Put the lid on federal spending . In addition to balancing the federal checkbook, Congress should set limits on discretionary spending. Every year members of Congress have the opportunity to make choices about taxpayer dollars that are spent as part of the discretionary budget. Just like American families who make tough decisions every day, Congress must learn to prioritize and live within its means.

3. Cut programs that don't work. Every year, the President identifies a number of government programs that are either outdated or just don't work. Members of Congress should be required to consider those recommendations and determine whether or not they should be terminated. A commonsense budget enforcement tool, "expedited rescission" was passed by the House in the early 90's and was included as part of the President Obama's fiscal year 2010 budget.

4. Reduce the deficit. Known as a "budget reconciliation trigger," this tool forces Congress to live within the parameters set forth in the federal budget. At the end of every year, Congress would be required to cut spending to meet these targets, effectively reducing the deficit over

time.

5. Balance the budget. Every year we add to the federal deficit, a mandatory tax is imposed on every single American - a "debt tax" that cannot be repealed. The amount of money the federal government is required to pay in interest on the national debt every year is already more than we spend on education and veterans combined. In order to eliminate this unnecessary tax, we must begin incremental reforms to balance the budget. A constitutional amendment requiring budgetary balance by 2020 will help us get there.

6. Be honest about our fiscal obligations. All too often, political pressures lead to dishonest budgets. One way to help fix this problem is to require that the federal government produce an honest assessment of its fiscal obligations over the course of 75 years.

7. Establish a fiscal commission. The greatest threat to our nation's economic security is our long-term fiscal imbalance. A fiscal reform commission would take the necessary steps to ensure our nation's long term fiscal sustainability by forcing Congress to make the tough decisions about revenue and spending.

8. Improve transparency and accountability. As members of Congress we have a responsibility to improve transparency, recover overpayments and hold government agencies accountable for wasteful spending. This measure would reduce the estimated \$98 billion in improper payments - those that occur when a federal agency pays too much or pays twice for a product or service.

9. Establish performance-based budgeting. Performance-based budgeting is a results oriented budget tool that sets goals and performance targets for agencies, and measures their results, much like a small business. A critical component of the Blue Dog Blueprint for Fiscal Reform, performance-based budgeting is a commonsense policy that makes government more efficient, effective and accountable.

10. Eliminate waste, fraud and abuse. In order to put the country back on a fiscally responsible path, it is critical that we root out and eliminate waste, fraud and abuse in government spending. Research shows that every \$1.00 we put into "program integrity accounts," we get \$1.50 back. The Blue Dog plan would increase authorization for these program integrity accounts over the next 5 years.

11. Account for every dollar. Evaluating every dollar spent on our national defense is not only good fiscal practice; it is a matter of national security. Like all other major federal agencies, the Department of Defense should be subject to annual audits, beginning in the fiscal year 2017. Senators John McCain and Claire McCaskill have already introduced this measure in the Senate which, simply put, is just good government.

12. Close tax loopholes. It is critical that the federal government continue to identify and report loopholes and inefficiencies within the current tax system. The Blue Dogs would propose expanding these reports to reflect the total revenue lost and to identify inefficient tax subsidies.

13. Take the politics out of the equation. In order to promote efficiency and eliminate undue political pressures, this provision would transition the Joint Committee on Taxation to an independent, nonpartisan legislative branch agency much like the Congressional Budget Office.

14. Eliminate duplication and inefficiency. Government programs that are duplicative or inefficient can be a substantial drain on the federal budget. Establishing an independent, bipartisan commission to recommend reorganizational changes to the federal government would help to streamline these programs and save taxpayer dollars.

15. Review and terminate unnecessary federal programs. A "Sunset Commission" should be established to conduct regular reviews of federal programs and agencies, and make recommendations as to those which should be terminated. This provision would also require Congress to reauthorize current programs, rather than allow them to be funded in perpetuity, unchecked.

To learn even more about the Blue Dog's blueprint to restore fiscal integrity to America, [visit the Blue Dog website by clicking here](#)